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Conference Abstract

Launching a Risk Assessment Project

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Abstract

In 2017 Carnegie Museum of Natural History (CM) received funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to conduct a risk assessment for collections. CM had already conducted two general conservation surveys (1989 and 2010) and an environmental survey (2011), all funded by IMLS. The next logical step was to do a risk assessment.

The initial planning was done through the development of a funding proposal. Both the concept and the process had to be supported by administration and staff, which was ensured up front through the development of the grant application. At the time, we were fortunate enough to have a new administration that supported this project as a logical step toward developing a long-term collection care strategy. In the application we identified the most experienced subject matter expert as a consultant (R. R. Waller, Project Heritage Inc.). Waller has a longstanding relationship with CM, having been part of the core team in the general conservation surveys. Waller worked closely with the grant application team to develop the project schedule and internal team. Additionally, the grant application proposed the use of Waller's Cultural Property Risk Analasys Model (CPRAM) to assess our risks.

One key element in developing the proposal was the acknowledgment of limited staff time. This was solved by including money to hire a Collections Associate dedicated to the project, full time for the two-year duration of the project. There is a steep learning curve for the process. Having this "gatekeeper" to manage the data being gathered maintains consistencey and focuses adequate staff time to keep the project moving forward.

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The overall goal of the project is to identify risks to the collections in a quantifiable manner. Using these data we will prioritize those risks and subsequently develop reasonable strategies to reduce the risks. This project will inform the overall strategic plan currently being developed for CM. By strategically including a few non-collection staff in the project, the risk assessment work will also promote better understanding and communication of collection concerns across the museum and our parent organization.

This poster examines the initial phase of the two-year project. It demonstrates how we, at CM, are approaching the organization of the CPRAM, training staff, and beginning this complex project.

Keywords

Risk Assessment, Project Management

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